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## **Benefits process for those seeking COVID-19 relief takes step forward**

Residents across the greater Milwaukee area have been struggling with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. In support of those residents, **Alderman Chantia Lewis** penned a letter last week to Caleb Frostman, secretary of the state Department of Workforce Development, seeking clarification on what can be done to improve the process.

Secretary Frostman's response letter (**attached**) details steps the state has taken to better support the influx of unemployment claims. Some of the internal steps the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has taken include: Having over 150 Unemployment Insurance Division (UI) employees work overtime; Training and transferring additional employees to work the UI call center; Extending allowable time to complete application filing from 14 days to 28 days; Updating FAQs on a consistent basis in English, Spanish, and Hmong.

"While there could still be more done to support those in need I appreciate Secretary Frostman's quick response in detailing what steps are being taken to support the community," said Alderman Lewis. "Our residents will need every bit of support to get through these challenging times, and I encourage everyone involved to think creatively and proactively moving forward."

As part of the state stimulus package recently signed into law, the first week of unemployment eligibility known as the "waiting week" was temporarily waived. Those who filed starting the week of March 15 will receive retroactive payment for their waiting week. Additionally, beginning the week of April 26, most individuals will receive an additional \$600 per week added to their benefit as part of the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) program. This is paid retroactively to the week starting March 29, 2020. No additional action is needed to receive the FPUC payment.

Information about the benefits application process, including instructional videos and answers to frequently asked questions, is available on the DWD website at <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/ui/>.